



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Mansion's cavernous interior dwarfs Caroline and Jack Eitzen.

Home's creators give their view

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LA SELVA BEACH — The view is gorgeous. The big house sits on a hill above Manresa Beach, looking out at an expanse of ocean in one direction and soft green fields in the other and the first thought is — *Italian!* No, not just *Italian*, but, better — *Mediterranean!*

The whole thing — the huge home, the ocean, the green fields — brings to mind the lavish villas on the Mediterranean coast.

Just look at the size — more than 13,000 square feet. The exquisite doors and huge windows. The turn-of-the-cen-

tury mouldings — not just on the outside, but inside, downstairs, on the first floor, or better yet, the "daylight basement." And the tile, covering the roof and ornate ones covering the dome that sits above the front of the house as if awaiting a royal caliph's entrance.

But the dome is not a dome; it's an "entrance portico."

And the house is hardly a home, since it sits there, with plywood walls and bare rafters, mustily waiting for the carpenters and tile layers and landscapers to show up for work and finish what they started.

Started!

Jack and Caroline Eitzen just want to

finish what they had to stop building two and a half years ago.

Because what they have here is not just a house, no, what they have is a failure to communicate, "a problem in processing," a bureaucratic tiger by the tail.

What they have is the Viviano mansion of La Selva Beach, a structure that has become something of a house of cards, dealt out to various players, such as an angry county government, critics of county building regulations, lovers of Italian-Mediterranean architectural styles and connoisseurs of the Byzantine.

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The home is located just off San Andreas Road, a roadway that affords fine views of it as well as of a companion villa.

The Eitzens don't own the home, Peter Viviano does. But it's obvious in talking to the Eitzens, that this creation is their baby, even if it is being built with Viviano's money.

Viviano, they say, "goes with the flow" of their ideas and designs. He has been and remains "very patient," says Jack.

But what they're doing, want to finish doing, is use their patron's patience and money to create something for the ages.

But the county doesn't understand.

At least one county supervisor — Robley Levy, within whose district the home sits — wants them to tear off the top part of the structure, remove the dome, open the floodgates to barbarism and tastelessness and undo what the Eitzens have carefully wrought.

Others say that the Eitzens cynically doubled the size of the home, without revising their building permit, while the county building department apparently remained in a state of blissful ignorance.

They also say that a third story was added, although the original permit called for but two stories. They say that the dome also rises in apparent disregard of what was to be allowed.

Not so, says Jack. The home is a "two-story house with a daylight basement," and it's a "portico entrance, not a dome" that will greet visitors, whenever they start arriving, county-permitted.

And there is visible logic to what he is saying — the third story is not an additional floor that was tacked onto an already burgeoning structure, but is more of a loft, albeit a huge one, framed within the original configuration.

But issues such as framing, architecture and style have been lost in the seemingly inexorable path the controversy over the mansion has taken.

Jack says that the county knew

about the size of the home "two years ago — and then it became a processing problem."

"There's been a lack of communication," says Caroline.

The county, after a complaint by Levy's office, ordered the Eitzens to stop work on the home in September of 1985, although building inspectors had been on the site earlier that year.

"We got inspections," Jack says, but adds he does not want to further inflame the issue by getting into the role of county agencies.

Now, he says, it has become a "landscape issue" and they have already presented a plan to the county that will more than screen the home from San Andreas Road and the beach.

"It's not like we're Wingspread or something," he says, referring to the controversial proposal to build a huge hotel-conference center complex along a coastal bluff in Aptos.

Levy says the issue goes much further than a matter of architectural style, that it involves equal enforcement of county regulations, no matter how much money is involved.

If the county allows the Viviano home to stand as is, argues Levy, then how can it expect other builders to comply with building laws?

"The fact that it is a monumental structure taking great wealth to build" does not change the law, she says.

Viviano, backed by the Eitzens, is suing the county, saying it has no jurisdiction to order structural changes in the home. Meanwhile, the county has filed its own lawsuit against Viviano, without naming the Eitzens, that could cost the Campbell man hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines.

Jack says that they should have and would have paid double the building fees to the county to resolve the issue the way other such permit violations have been resolved in the past, but the non-stop barrage of newspaper stories and television snips about the home have caused the issue to drag on and on.

And where does Peter Viviano come into all this? Well, he pays for it.

The Viviano family, they say, owns a trucking company and the home will be enjoyed by the entire family.

The Viviano home sits on a terrace above Manresa Beach, sharing a driveway and grand style with another home, already completed. This home was built by Caroline's parents. In fact, Jack's father, Ken, did a lot of the work on Caroline's parent's home and is helping Jack and Caroline work on the Viviano home.

Caroline says that her father, Tony Cocciardi, was a Saratoga prune and apricot farmer before moving to La Selva. Her mother's sister is married to Peter Viviano.

Jack and Caroline said they never gave Caroline's uncle a bid — don't, in fact, know what the home will end up costing — but that they are doing the work for "a nickel on the dollar" compared to what it would cost, for instance, to have artisans make the elaborate plaster mouldings. Oh, yes, the mouldings — hundreds of mouldings, made

painstakingly by Jack and Caroline, from scratch, but now warping in the daylight basement downstairs as time slowly passes.

"We're trying to bring back the old flavor of Santa Cruz," says Jack, who was an insulation contractor before taking on this "family project."

He and Caroline talked to a host of "old-timers," in Santa Cruz and San Francisco, to learn the secrets of the lost art of elaborate mouldings. The couple point to the unfinished Corinthian columns on the outside, also made from scratch. Jack's father designed the French-style glass doors, which contain another lost art — wooden, built-in weatherstripping, which, they hope, will keep out the howling winds that charge in off the ocean.

Winds probably don't concern them as much as the howling coming from the County Center and the Board of Supervisors. But, say the Eitzens, "We're working very hard to comply with the county."

Levy, says Jack, is only "one-fifth of the wheel" and they are hoping the other four supervisors

will understand their position. Why, Gary Patton has been out to the house, they note, and has publicly praised the home.

The Eitzens also have been conducting a public-relations campaign in surrounding neighborhoods — hosting receptions for neighbors, calling them up and asking for their support at the public hearings the county has been holding on the issue.

Caroline, who was born in Italy, says that people should appreciate what they are trying to do here. "In Europe — what has withstood time?" she asks, answering, "The buildings!"

And Jack asks, "Would it be so bad?" to have beautiful mansions occupy the high ground above the quiet community of La Selva Beach.

"I'll be so excited," Caroline says, if the county drops its objections and lets the house proceed. So much work still to do, mouldings to resurrect, tile to be laid ...

A dark thought intrudes. What if, what if ... they order you to tear off the top of the house?

"That's a bad question," answers Jack. "It's not going to happen."



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Jack and Caroline Eitzen show off some of their ornate mouldings.